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FM AMEMBASSY SANAA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8490
INFO GCC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
COMUSNAVCENT BAHRAIN PRIORITY
USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 005449

STATE FOR NEA, S/CT AND P

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/24/2010

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [YM](#)

SUBJECT: SALEH CITES USN CULPABILITY IN THE USS COLE ATTACK

REF: A. SANAA 5425 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. SANAA 5443

[1](#)C. SANAA 5439

[1](#)D. SANAA 5430

(U) CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR BARBARA K. BODINE. REASONS 1.5
B/D.

[1](#)1. (C) IN HIS MBC INTERVIEW EARLIER THIS WEEK, YEMENI PRESIDENT SALEH STATED THAT "THE AMERICANS MADE A GROSS MISTAKE WHEN THEY MOVED SUCH A HUGE SHIP (THE USS COLE) INTO ADEN HARBOR WITHOUT PROVIDING SUFFICIENT PROTECTION...WITHOUT (YEMENI) PROTECTIVE VESSELS GOING IN WITH IT. THEY DID NOT ASK FOR OUR PROTECTION AND THIS IS A MISTAKE, A GROSS MILITARY MISTAKE." THE PRESIDENT STATED VIRTUALLY THE EXACT SAME THING TO THE AMBASSADOR ON NOVEMBER 21 (OTHER SUBJECTS SEPTELS).

[1](#)2. (C) AMBASSADOR REJOINED THAT IT WAS HIGHLY DISTASTEFUL THAT THE USS COLE WOULD BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ATTACK IT SUFFERED. SHE PRESUMED THAT THE MISINFORMATION THE PRESIDENT HAD BEEN PROVIDED ON THIS SCORE WAS PROVIDED BY THE SAME "SENIOR ADVISOR" WHO INFORMED HIM THE EXPLOSION WAS AN INTERNAL ACCIDENT (I.E., THE COMMANDER OF THE NAVY IN ADEN, GENERAL IBRAHIM). SHE ALSO REMINDED THE PRESIDENT THAT IT WAS YEMEN'S RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT. THIS WAS NOT SOMETHING WE NEED REQUEST. IT WAS TO BE EXPECTED.

[1](#)3. (C) SHE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT, CONTRARY TO A FOLLOW-UP POINT BY THE PRESIDENT, THE YEMEN NAVY WAS AWARE OF THE BSF. THE ROYG WAS INFORMED IN A PROPER AND TIMELY MANNER, AS WELL AS APPROPRIATE PORT AUTHORITIES. "DIDN'T KNOW" WAS NOT AN ACCEPTABLE EXCUSE BY THE YEMEN NAVY. SALEH CONCEDED THAT MAYBE YEMENI INTERAGENCY COMMUNICATIONS WAS NOT ALWAYS GOOD AND THAT THE NAVY'S ARGUMENT WAS NOT TERRIBLY CREDIBLE.

[1](#)4. (C) COMMENT: WE ARE QUITE SURE THIS TRASH WAS DELIVERED BY THE NAVAL COMMANDER, PROBABLY IN DEFENSE FROM A PRESIDENTIAL QUERY AS TO WHY HE HAD NOT TAKEN THE NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS. THE COMMANDER IS UNDOUBTEDLY THE PURVEYOR OF THE INTERNAL EXPLOSION THEORY AND IS WELL-KNOWN FOR BEING BOTH INCOMPETENT AND VENAL. ONE FACTOR IN A RECENT FRENCH DECISION TO CANCEL A PLANNED PORT VISIT IN ADEN WAS A \$1000.00 "SHAKEDOWN" FROM THE COMMANDER. THE YEMEN NAVY AT ONE POINT ATTEMPTED TO CHARGE THE USN A \$500 "ESCORT SERVICES" FEE, A SERVICE NEITHER REQUESTED NOR NEEDED. WHEN RAISED WITH THE SOUTHERN AREA COMMANDER, THESE FEES STOPPED. IT WAS ALSO OBVIOUS TO BOTH US AND TO SENIOR MILITARY OFFICIALS IN ADEN SHORTLY AFTER THE ATTACK, SPECIALLY GENERALS ALAYWAH AND MAGWALLAH, THAT THE YEMEN NAVY HAD NO CONCEPT OF HOW TO SET UP PICKET SHIPS. THE DRESSING DOWN THE COMMANDER RECEIVED FROM THE TWO GENERALS PORT SIDE AND IN FRONT OF A SENIOR AMERICAN DELEGATION WAS DEVASTATING. WE SUSPECT THE COMMANDER IS STILL SCRAMBLING TO SAVE HIS JOB.

BODINE